1: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1937
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this to be untrue. Balli called her mother by an obscene term because the latter was attempting to stop her from having an illegal relationship with a man who stood in the wrong kinship position to her. Natjurili knew this when he threw spears at her mother (his sister); still he felt impelled to throw them.

Possibly the structure of the kinship system will explain this seemingly anomalous behavior of a brother to his sister; or, to put it another way, structure can explain the function.

Yeppa does belong to her clan and family, but for most practical purposes her family and clan lose her to the husband's. If she is called "rubbish" and without relatives it means: "We put no real value on this woman, we have thrown her out of our clan, really she was never in it. Our family and clan have not been damaged by her loss as our sister and daughter since she is wakinu and does not belong to them, but we do value her as a wife and mother among your people; hence the various guarantees we make of keeping her with you. We don't want her back, we want to keep the relationship permanent; that is why we say, 'She is without relatives.'"

When dué swears at yeppa, and wawa or yukiyuko throws spears at her and her sisters, it is of course absurd that she, the offended, should suffer rather than the person responsible. The Murngin know this; they say, "It is silly, but when I hear those words at my sister I must do something. I throw spears at her."

In view of the feeling against hearing filthy speeches before one's sisters, the following structural interpretation seems to throw the most light on this behavior.

Yeppa is a member of one's own immediate family and patrilineal line. The emotional ties to her are very strong. She is from babyhood to childhood loved and petted by one's father. She is her brother's companion before he reaches the age of circumcision; thereafter, being felt to be such a near relative and with such a strong emotional reciprocation, she is of necessity taboo. This is the woman that a brother throws spears at for an act of which she is the victim. The interpretation is simple. Her patrilineal and family bond are very strong; everyone knows that in a final test a brother would fight his own dué if he went too far when mistreating her. Given the fact that a man cannot hear his sister sworn at, he must choose either to defend his sister and fight her husband,[17] or to do nothing. If he chose the first, it

[17] The situation in the relationship ego ⟷ sister's husband exists in all ego's other an relationships: to attack any clan relative would cause trouble.

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593 607 201 would immediately endanger and possibly destroy for a time the whole lateral structure of his clan's kinship with the rest of the tribe. A fight with a dué of another clan would immediately call clan solidarity into action; all the brother's brothers, sons, fathers, et cetera, would necessarily come to his aid, just as these same relatives of dué would help dué, so that a general fight would result. A general re-exchange of women by forceful means would be a very likely possibility. Obviously only the most extreme circumstances would force such action.

Doing nothing is conceivable, but extremely difficult if the emotions are highly aroused by the mirriri. It is out of keeping with general Murngin behavior not to express an emotion socially. Therefore an entirely different possibility has been seized upon and socialized. The sister is treated as though she were her husband, and spears are thrown at her as though she and not he were the culprit. This saves any trouble between the clans.

The custom of throwing spears gives ritualistic expression to the wakinu concept, and to its opposite. The woman has been called a person without relatives, something actually impossible in the social life. She is rubbish to her family when the question arises whether she is to stay in her new capacity as mother or go back to her own clan. When brothers throw spears at their sisters, they demonstrate that she is not a part of her own family, even though dué calls her by terms slandering her as well as her family and clan; they will not act against the husband or his clan. On the other hand, the custom expresses extreme displeasure at hearing one's sister abused. "This woman is called sister by me, I cannot hear obscenity used against her. I throw spears at her to show my dislike, because if I throw them at you, it would cause trouble out of proportion to the cause of it."

A man throws spears at his sister not only when her dué swears at her but when anyone else does. Because of clan solidarity, he could not throw them at any member of his own clan except yeppa, which is allowed by the wakinu concept.

593 201 The remaining problem is: Why does a man throw spears at *all* his sisters instead of confining his act to the one sworn at? All women who stand in the relation of sister to ego, no matter how distant the clan, are treated in exactly the same manner (not spoken to, touched, et cetera); the mirriri falls under this class of behavior, both as belonging to a general pattern and as an extension of the behavior that comes from the feeling surrounding a blood sister. Also, throwing spears at

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all sisters accentuates the ritualistic nature of the spear-throwing. Emotionally, throwing at several women instead of one is more satisfactory since the feelings linked with the mirriri are intense and need much activity to vent them.

*Mari ⟷ Kutara Solidarity*

As has been said, the lateral structure of the Murngin kinship system is potentially weak. The gawel-waku reciprocal is no exception, because of the change of daughter to wife and because gawel may not give his daughter to his proper waku. This relationship is most decidedly strengthened by the addition of the mari-marelker and gurrong-kutara lines of descent. The reason is simple. Ego's mari is gawel to ego's own gawel. This places ego's gawel in the same weak position toward ego's most generous and helpful friend (mari) as that in which ego finds himself toward his own gawel. Many natives have been recorded as saying the following: "Mari is the boss of my mokul rumeru and gawel and helps me get my galle." Through the mari-kutara tie there is strength between gawel and waku, so that a solid bond is established from mari in the second ascending generation and second lateral line to the right of ego, and kutara in the second descending generation and second lateral line to the left of ego.

Kutara inherits mari's personal names, hence an identity of personality in names. Since names are of the utmost importance in Murngin thought and there is a feeling of sameness about things bearing the same name, the great solidarity between mari and kutara can be understood. Even after mari's death he still comes to kutara's aid. He is an eternal source of health and comfort to kutara. The latter, usually a younger man, is also a great help to mari, for he can give physical aid in time of war, is an active huntsman, and, all in all, usually participates in the social life as a mature male still in his prime. Moreover, they belong to the same moiety, and frequently to the same clan, which adds to the strength of the positive relationship.

An examination of the kinship structure demonstrates the reasons for this solidarity. Mari's kutara uses the term gawel for the man who is in the relationship of waku to mari. In other words, the person to whom kutara stands in the weakest relationship, his gawel, is a social personality with whom kutara's mari is in exactly the opposite relationship—mari is strong with kutara's gawel where kutara is weak. Mari's relationship in this case is positive while kutara's is negative.

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them after they have gone through their initiations into the higher age grades. The sacred names of the women are never known by them and are used only by the men. Each person has anywhere from four to ten names. With the coming of the Malays the natives had a new source from which to obtain their personal names: some aspect of the material culture of the Malays as it is expressed in Australian waters, or occasionally a personal name taken from the Malays met. All the Murngin are anxious to acquire as many names as possible; and when they come in contact with white civilization they are always pleased to obtain a personal name from the whites, whether it be one of our personal names, a nickname, possibly a place name, or sometimes a combination of these elements, as for example, Cape Don Tommy (Cape Don being the name of a prominent landmark in the Arafura Sea).

## APPENDIX VI

## MURNGIN SIGN LANGUAGE

All the tribes in northeastern Arnhem Land have a very elaborate sign language which is used between peoples who do not understand each other's spoken languages, between the deaf and dumb, and by young men who are observing taboos of silence after certain initiations. The complete sign language of the Murngin was not worked out by the author, but sufficient samples of it were taken to indicate its general outlines and the methods of developing its symbolism. Listed below are several score of words and their sign-language equivalents.

Bapa—touching the right shoulder with the left hand.
Arndi—touching the breast.
Marikano and maraicha—touching the top of the head.
Gatu—touching the right shoulder.
Wawa and yukiyuko—touching the calf of the leg.
Yeppa—touching the calf of the leg.
Gawel—touching the inside of the right elbow.
Male and female galle—touching the left and right buttocks.
Mokul rumeru—touching the knee.
Male and female mari and kutara—touching the backbone.
Marelker, gurrong, dumungur, momelker, and natchiwalker—touching the knee.
Kaminyer, nati, and momo—touching the chin.
Mokul bapa—touching the right shoulder.

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201 Old man—pulling the hair with the fingers.
Uncircumcised boy, djemerkuli age grade—hand held up to indicate the size of the boy.
Large kangaroo—rubbing the fingers across the forehead.
Little kangaroo—rubbing the fingers across the mouth.
Emu—the thumb on top of the other fingers, the right arm flexed, and the hand moving up and forward in imitation of the head of emu when walking.
Opossum—arms the same way, but with the finger and thumb pointed as though one were holding a small stick. This is an imitation of the opossum and his rapid walking.
Bandicoot—thumb flexed, next two fingers slightly bent, last two flexed; the same position of the arm and same movements of the hand as for opossum and emu.
Snakes (all snakes)—index finger moves sideways several times in imitation of movement of the reptile.
Bird—movement of the elbows (fluttering).
Hawk—elbow raised, hand lowered, fist clenched, but the thumb, little finger and index finger straight.
Jabiru—touching the nose with the index finger and moving the finger in a straight line from the nose (this is to indicate the long beak of this bird).
Cockatoo—touching the teeth with the fingers and then moving the fingers to indicate the large beak of the bird.
Tobacco—index finger in the mouth and smacking of the lips.
Canoe—elbows out at an angle at the side, with the fingers bent at the knuckles, then moving the lower part of the fingers like paddles.
Paddles—imitating the use of them by moving the hands in their positions on the paddles back and forth.
Dog—two hands before the chest, then moving them in imitation of a dog trotting.
Woman—poking fingers into the head above the ear. ("Women always poke themselves here when they cry.")
Water—protruding the right cheek and popping the fingers.
Honey—right index finger pushed in the mouth and pulled out with a smack.
Axe—the hand held straight out with all the fingers straight and at an angle before the chest to imitate an axe blade, and a cutting movement made with the hand.
Spear—right hand with the index finger bent like a spear-thrower, index finger of the left hand pointed like a spear.
Basket—index finger and thumb of the right hand held together and moved in imitation of weaving.

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Stone spear head—a hitting movement of the right hand as though one were knocking off the flakes from the left hand.

Hooked spear—left hand shut, the right hand moving as though it were cutting into the wood.

Fish—left index finger to the mouth with a sucking-in sound.

Shark—right hand back of the body and moving back and forth. ("The tail of that shark moves around like that.")

Porpoise—left index finger is moved from the mouth while the sound "f-u-f-f" is made.

Hair belt—right hand held up and the index finger and thumb rubbed together.

Yam—right index finger in the mouth and closing teeth on the bent finger.

Palm nuts—two hands placed together with a rubbing movement, then the right hand moved like a blade across the left hand, the first part of this symbol indicating the form of the nut and the second the method of taking off the outer covering.

Turtle—movement of cutting the throat with the left hand. ("It's good food.")

Tortoise-shell turtle—index and middle fingers placed against nose, spread, and moved like pincers. ("The nose that belongs to him is a very small one.")

Dugong—chin on the chest with the shoulders hunched.

Oyster—hitting down two or three times with the thumb and index finger and bringing the hands to the mouth, in imitation of eating the oyster after it has been cracked open.

Eggs—clenching the left fist, the right hand hitting against it imitative of breaking the shell, then bringing the left hand to the mouth.

Circumcised—left index finger protruded, right index moved like the knife around the first joint.

Uncircumcised—pulling the finger of the right hand from off the protruding left index finger.

The affirmative sign—nodding of the head.

The negative sign—shaking the head laterally.

I said or I want to say—touching the tongue.

To come or come quickly—putting the right hand to the back of the head, palm open, and then bringing the hand forward quickly.

To stop—two arms flexed and pushed back and the body at an angle with the feet.

White man—index finger of the right hand moved across from the right eye to the left of the chin and the left hand placed on the left hip, elbow at an angle.

I am going away—touch the chest and move the hand out quickly to the side.

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201 Sleep—left hand to the head, with the head cocked on one side.
Dead—left hand with the palm half open, the thumb and finger forming a partly closed circle.
The end—move the hand from side to side before the face, then downward.
Run—fists clenched, with the two hands moving up and down in front of the chest.
Eat—gesture of holding food in the fingers and putting in the mouth.
To show dislike—turn the head to the right and shake it and push the left hand out to the side.
To announce the arrival of a number of people—move two hands over the face.
Drink—move the open hand to the head and put the head back.
Shedding blood for a totem—arms flexed and fingers like knife cutting under part of the arm.
Digging—elbow out at an angle with the hand pointing down and the fingers moving like a dog digging a hole.

## APPENDIX VII

## ANTHROPOMETRY

144 During the period of my field work in North Australia I measured close to four hundred aborigines. The geographical sections from which the groups came were the general areas around Port Darwin, the Victoria River, Melville and Bathurst Islands, the Murngin area (northeast Arnhem Land), and the southern part of the mouth of the Roper River. Generally speaking, it can be said that these natives show few differences from those of Central and Southern Australia; and there seems to be little or no connection between Australia and Melanesia or Papua or the other Pacific groups, with the possible exception of New Caledonia where there do seem to be indications of Australian relations. The results of the research are now being written up for future publication.[1]

141 The stature of the five geographical groups measured by me in North Australia varies from 166.50 centimeters to 169.62. The sitting height varies from 82.00 centimeters to 83.08. The biacromial, from 34.64 to 36.62. Chest depth, from 17.72 to 19.08. Chest breadth, from 23.40 to 24.90. Head length varies from 188.79 millimeters to 193.86. Head breadth, from 134.02 to 138.88. Head height, from 120.30 to 127.71. Head circumference, from

[1] See W. W. Howells and W. Lloyd Warner, "Anthroposcopy of the Natives of Arnhem Land and the Australian Race Problem," *Peabody Museum Papers*, 1933, Vol. XVI, No. 1.

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
OI17 Murngin OI17



159 ting by the fire when three young women came by. One of them was the girl. She said, "Come on with us. We are going to look for honeybee nests."

I did not know what to do. They were going to look for honeybee nests all right, but they wanted me to come along for other reasons. People were about when they asked me. I was ashamed not to go, and I was ashamed to go. I went. When we walked away, one of them saw some honeybees flying and we followed them to their hive in a hollow tree trunk. One of them cut a long forked stick and put it on the side of the tree as a ladder. They got up and cut away at the side of the tree. By and by they found the honey and brought it to the ground. When they did this they called for me to come and help eat it.

I like honey very much, but I was ashamed to be with those three women, and I was afraid of what they might do. While all of them were down on their hands and knees eating the honey I sneaked away and hid behind a big tree that had fallen down. They looked up and called for me, and they tried to find me, but they couldn't. I lay there very quiet.

That noon I came into camp. There was an old man there. He called me over and said he wanted to talk to me. He was very quiet, and he seemed kind, and I believed he wanted to help me.

"Why did you run away from that girl this morning?" he said. "She likes you. Don't be afraid. No one will hurt you. Tonight when she comes to her hut she will want you to go with her. You go in with her." he talked Macassar.

I thought then, "These people are all right. They won't hurt me. I'll sleep with her tonight." But I was still ashamed and a little afraid. Everything was all different from the way it was in my country. I had never been with a woman before, and this also made me ashamed.

That night I watched people. I could not understand what they said so I watched. If a man picked up a spear I held my spear. If men picked up spears and walked around I followed them with my eyes. Under my half-closed eyelids, as I sat by the fire, I watched the girl to see what she would do. I saw by the way she acted she wanted me, but I was still afraid and ashamed, and we do not make sweethearts like that in my country.

I sneaked away from the camp and went out to the beach and sat down in the canoe. There was a boy there. I pointed to the canoe and then to my [201] tongue and said by sign language, "What do you call this?"

He told me. I pointed to a stone. He told me. We did this for a while. At last I hit the thigh of my right leg and pointed to my pudenda to ask him what he called wife. He told me. I was very surprised to find that they had the same word for wife as they did for husband. That seemed to me very silly, for we have a word for each in my country.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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nonchalantly remarked that when bush-rats spoiled most of the stores, they bartered fish, wallaby, and lily-seeds from nomads.

We saw white-washed aboriginal cottages built from locally burnt shell-lime, stones and ant-bed that had been standing for twenty years. Weird outlines of hands were in a number of bark huts, and an old nomad explained that when they 'go bush' they leave the mark of a hand in the house of a friend. Imprints are made by chewing moistened clay and spraying it from the mouth over a hand outstretched on the bark. When the hand is removed its outline remains in the centre of the white clay.

Indifferent land had been cultivated, and in good seasons yielded tapioca, sweet-potatoes, coconuts, and bananas. Nomads work in the gardens during the wet season and also collect bêche-de-mer from the mud-flats for export. Women weave baskets, fans, and trays from wild pandanus palm, and these are marketed for them by the mission.

At Goulburn Island I met some of the young Fijians who work on all these stations. Kolinio was a giant, a carpenter by trade and the son of a chief. He introduced me to the satisfying juice of the green coconut by gashing a lip in the soft shell of a green nut and handing it to me brimming with cold, exquisitely flavoured liquid. It has been inadequately likened to cold lemonade. Fijians get on well with aborigines and perhaps their colour is a link rather than a bar. They are born agriculturists, but need to unlearn a lot when they come from their fertile islands to desolate monsoonal Arnhem Land.

Milingimbi was at that time the end of the lugger trip. It is one of the many low scrub-covered islands and mud-flats known as the Crocodile Islands, yet within thirty miles of Milingimbi there is the densest Yulengor population in Arnhem Land. In 1918 this mission was begun as an extension of that at Goulburn Island. The advance seems

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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## LANGUAGES, SIGNS AND SMOKE-SIGNALS

From Cape Wilberforce to Arnhem Bay the ruggedness of the coastline is exceeded only by the precipitous bluffs of the English Company's Islands near by, and the whole area is known as 'Bwartaba' or 'rocky country', 'wartaba' being the name for rocks. Cape Grey is a prominent headland in the Gulf of Carpentaria and is called 'Bokorral', 'bokor' referring to the cliff-face and also to the human forehead.

Names for birds are sound-perfect imitations of bird calls. A crow is known by the raucous 'warrk', and native-companions making a noise resembling a low-toned gargle are called 'gorral-kor'. The brown pheasant calls pleasantly on several clipped notes and is known as 'bukbuk'.

Pithy sayings are in common use, and the best known have English equivalents. 'Mata-rang' is a man who never wanders far from his horde territory, or, when infrequently visiting distant friends, is for ever anxious to return home; literally he is a stick-in-the-mud. The term is also given to an adolescent who finds his mother's company preferable to that of boys of his own age and who follows her when she hunts for food.

If a man comes into a friendly camp and wishes to pass on important news, he waits for a lull in the conversation, and remarks cryptically: 'When the tide goes out, have a look on the beach and you will find something.' His hearers are instantly alert and make an opportunity for him to tell his story. There seem to be trouble-makers in every camp, with their accusations, rumours, and quarrels, and in exasperation they may be told to 'Get out and camp by yourself till the wind cleans your hair'.

Stone Age man has an extensive sign-language or semiology, and I accumulated a vocabulary of over two hundred simple signs for common customs, names, questions, instructions, and relationships. Sign-terms are generally imitations of the subject referred to; when making the sign

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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201 for a camp, a man raises his open palm and rests the side of his head on it, plainly suggesting a sleeping-place. Mosquitoes are suggested by stabbing a forefinger on parts of the anatomy, a shark is suggested by biting the forefinger, and to suggest a stingaree the same finger is swept down and forward from the mouth to imply the dangerous whipcord tail. A hand closed and held upright, with the extended forefinger waving inwards suggestively, refers to a man, and in the case of a boy, the same movement is followed by indicating his height. Rubbing the eyes with the fist signifies tears, and to say 'he is funny man' the signaller opens his mouth, nods his head and points to the humorist. Sucking the forefinger implies a fish; water is implied by tapping a bulge in the cheek. A stroke across the throat serves for a turtle, though the several varieties have further distinguishing signs.

Reference to the spearing of either men or game is by a casual flick of the right hand across the middle of the body. An ambush or stealthy night-raid is appropriately indicated by wiping the hand downwards over the face; death, or a corpse, by holding a hand in front of the face, with the fingers curved stiffly like claws. Hanging the fingers downwards from above the head serves for rain, and a clenched hand on the cheek means an egg.

[521] Sentences are semaphored by a series of quick movements, and I have known men to sit silently by a camp fire and converse for hours in sign language when the only sound was an occasional burst of laughter after the recounting of some episode. When returning to Yirrkala with nomads 202 in a canoe, they said there was trouble on the station and pointed to several men waving from the cliff-face. We were a mile from shore when one of the signallers took a piece of paper-bark and waved it so as to make his movements clearer. The crew read his message and told me that two local men had been ambushed and speared near Blue Mud Bay. Not

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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only did he identify the killers by relationship signs, but said that only one body had been recovered and that the killers had escaped to their own country near Arnhem Bay.

Undoubtedly this sign-language has been used in silently planning and directing well-organized attacks that bewildered marauding traders and took police parties by surprise. Attempts have been made to prove that messages have been tapped out on musical clapsticks, but clapsticks are used only for a limited number of timings in songs. Full details and the signal for attack have been given unobtrusively in sign-language by merely flicking the hands.

Just as the spoken language is a living one, so the sign-language is being extended to include developments from contact with foreigners. Reference to police is made by placing the wrists side by side and holding them in front to suggest handcuffs. Macassar proas and sailing-boats are indicated by stretching an arm forward, clenching the hand, and raising the thumb for a mast; a boat captain by closing the hands, as on a wheel, and swaying from the hips as when heaving on a helm. A white man's sign is in bending the elbows, sweeping the hands to the breasts and then downwards and outwards; his gun in bending the head to the right, squinting along an imaginary barrel held in the left hand, and drawing the right trigger hand backwards. Wiping a crooked forefinger along the lips refers to tobacco; cattle or tinned meat are denoted by placing a closed hand on either temple and extending the forefingers to look like horns.

I took Burramurra to Darwin for medical attention, and after a few days' treatment I brought him from hospital. He attracted some attention by his awkward gait, and another nomad waved his hands and looked questioningly toward us, till Burramurra answered him with laughter and further hand movements. He told me he had just been asked if he had been drinking whisky and where had he got it?

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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CHAPTER TWELVE

# *Aboriginal Temperament*

ABORIGINES are light-hearted and enjoy fun and laugther. 152
Youths are for ever sky-larking and playing practical jokes, [522]
and in ceremonial pantomimes the men spend a lot of time
singing, dancing, and mimicking birds and animals. Intense
joy is also expressed through prolonged wailing, when women 152
rhythmically pound their heads with sharp stones and spear- 201
heads till the blood flows freely.

Emotions lie close to the surface and without warning aborigines run through the gamut of them all. Some seem to be always weeping or wailing, but it would be wrong to imagine that they are a mournful or disconsolate race. To feel lonely for a son or daughter, temporarily in another part of the country, is enough to start a 'wail'. Others awake and join in for an hour or more before subsiding into sleep. When a family leaves camp the relatives will wail in loneliness for several nights, and so frequent are these wails that little attention is paid to them by the rest of the camp.

Twelve months after we landed at Yirrkala, the three boys who had been arrested and jailed in Darwin for their part [648]
in the Japanese killings in Caledon Bay were repatriated to Yirrkala. Relatives surrounded them on the beach and took them to the camp, where they all sat in an uneasy silence till the women, overcome with joy, started to wail. Everyone joined in, and the deep passionate baritone cries of the old man and father of the horde throbbed through the wailing chorus of his sons' and sons' sons' families. Their welcome continued till dawn, with crying and blood-letting interspersed with camp-songs and dances.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
OI17 Murngin OI17



accompanies the maiyabala to assist in locating and killing the murderer. Maiyabala are often carried in the mouth, in totemic dilly-bags, or rolled in bees wax and tied round the neck. They give extra strength and skill to the wearers and guide them to the enemy, who, in turn, is made unwary and tired.

Raiwola told me that he had accepted such a maiyabala but for years his vow remained unfulfilled. Then one day after a long kangaroo hunt in the rain he stood warming himself by a fire with several other men, amongst whom chanced to be the killer of his relative. Without a word Raiwola plunged his spear into him, and in reply to the astounded questions of the huntsmen, he produced his maiyabala as proof that it had been done in settlement of the old debt.

It is rarely left to one man to avenge a death, for in the heat of emotion that follows a killing the relatives go in a body to exact vengeance. Killing-parties are known as 'merringor', and their appropriate sign in the sign-language is wiping the open palm down over the face to suggest their ruthlessness in wiping out men, women, and children. In feverish passion, and with maiyabala and totemic dilly-bags slung from their necks, merringor lose all fear and travel relentlessly till they are lean and exhausted. They daub their bodies with white clay, a practice which plainly indicates their intentions, they creep silently on their enemies, and with wild yells they hurl their spears into the sleeping groups. Such raids are seldom bloodless, and more deaths result from these attacks than from all other forms of violence.

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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sticks were pulled out and thrown on the heap to deter inquisitive dingoes. 765

Meantime the grandfather sang songs appropriate to the departing spirit, the most important being the plover song. A plover is a spirit from Buralkor disguised with feathers so that mortals may see it, and its purpose is to guide human spirits on their way to the spirit world. Native-companions, geese, jungle fowls, and cockatoos are similarly revered by the Yiritja moiety, except that they have no qualms about eating them. Moreover, these are genuine birds and not visible spirits like the plover. Their importance lies in their supernatural ability to see spirits and to assist them. 765 533 825 [715]

As the grandfather sang the bird-songs, his sons accompanied him with clap-sticks and women danced and made the bird-signs. For the plover they held their hands in front of their shoulders with the fingers half clenched like talons; this gesture is also used ordinarily in their sign-language to indicate death, a corpse, or wandering ghost. Geese were introduced by imitating their cries and by holding short sticks between the hands for bird-perches. Long-winged native-companions could not be mistaken when the dancers extended their arms and flapped them. At the end of the ceremony a tribal-mother carried the bones to her camp and deposited them in the fork of a tree; in bush-camps such parcels can be seen in trees or in forked sticks. Skulls are of more importance and are painted and hoarded for as long as ten years. 765 535 201 825 765

It is usual to expose infants and to bury older children and adults, though no particular significance is attached to either method and both are preliminaries to the collecting of the skeleton. A corpse is buried in a shallow grave face downwards to facilitate the removal of the bones by lifting the backbone to which the greater part of the skeleton is attached. Bones may be collected in four or five days, a week or several months after burial, depending on the regard the [766] [764]

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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given to relatives, and by accepting them they pledge themselves to avenge the death of their kinsman. Bones are also worn as hunting-charms; the ghost follows the bone and guides the wearer to good hunting. Skeletons carried in canoes or sheltered in huts transfer their ghost to anything they touch, and rarely are they allowed to come into contact with private property.

Tabus are lifted by switching away the ghost with smoking twigs. This common 'muntja' ceremony is performed whenever news of a death reaches a camp, perhaps months after it has occurred, otherwise the roaming, mischievous ghost might haunt them indefinitely. Men are most particular in taking part in the ghost-laying practices, otherwise the ghost would trail them when hunting, and as animals can see these spirits it would not be possible to stalk and spear game.

An accepted etiquette is observed in breaking news of death. With an air of mystery the messenger imparts his information to two or three of the older men, and often it is ten or twelve hours before they divulge the news in open camp. I saw a man bring such news and tell it by signs to a few old men who agreed to keep the secret till they arranged the ghost-placating ceremony, and no one heard about it till the coterie commenced to sing for the unmistakable 'muntja'. Performers then derived great satisfaction from the furore; the rest of the camp ran to inquire about the death and to join in the laying of the ghost.

Dead nomads' names are never repeated, though reference to them can be made by signs or by relationship terms. If the restless ghost heard its old familiar name it would probably lodge in the camp or in the body of the person using it. A nomad with a dead man's name will change it or be referred to under a class-name. A little girl, Milly-milly, had her euphonious name changed to Arrung-giddy-niddy after the death of an older Milly-milly. The child appreciated